

# Relative Caregiver Program

## ANNOUNCEMENT OF AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS

### GENERAL INFORMATION

Legislation supporting the development of the Relative Caregiver Program initially passed in the Tennessee General Assembly on June 9, 2000. This legislation recognized that children who are at-risk or had been the victim of abuse, dependency or neglect and whose parents are unable to provide for their care are best served if cared for by appropriate and willing relatives – as opposed to being placed in foster care with non-relatives. The legislation further recognized that, while relatives may be willing to care for these children, doing so may be difficult due to financial limitations or the need for other supportive services.

The Relative Caregiver Program began providing services and supports to children in relative care and their caregivers in 16 counties of Tennessee in May 2001 – Shelby, Davidson, and the 14 counties in Upper Cumberland region. It is the desire of the Tennessee Department of Children's Services to further support the recognition of relative caregivers as a natural resource for caring for children requiring out-of-home-care – in order to prevent children from entering and re-entering the formal child welfare system when at all possible, and to help children maintain familial and cultural connections. In support of this effort, the Tennessee Department of Children's Services is implementing the Relative Caregiver Program statewide. Effective July 1, 2005, the Department initiated Phase I of a two-phase plan to expand the Relative Caregiver Program statewide. Phase I expansion includes expansion to Knox, Hamilton, East and Northwest regions. Phase II expansion will include the remaining five regions of the state: Northeast, South Central, Southwest, Southeast and Mid-Cumberland.

The Department of Children's Services (DCS) will closely monitor this program and guide its development. DCS understands there has been a dramatic increase in the number of children being raised by their grandparents and other relatives. DCS further recognizes the need to provide quality support services to relative caregivers to assist them in keeping their children in the family system. Additionally, DCS recognizes the over-representation of minority children spending longer periods of time in more restrictive placements, and believes building more support for relative caregiver families will help to address this area of critical need.

It is the intent of DCS:

- 1) To ensure support is available to relatives so children can remain within their cultural and familial networks.
- 2) To prevent children from entering into the custody of the state and support them in the care of relatives – when appropriate.
- 3) To assess how many children could exit custody if family members were provided needed information and support outside the formal system of foster care.
- 4) To support the creation of a public-private support system separate from the public foster care system because relative caregivers have unique strengths and needs different from non-relative foster parents.
- 5) To assess the effectiveness of this support system.

It is expected that successful program applicants will address how the services will be provided through collaboration with other community programs.

Services available to relative caregiver families must include:

- 1) Information and Referral (i.e. Legal Services, Individual & Family Counseling, Material Assistance, Homemaker Services, Housing Assistance, Mental Health Services)
- 2) Caregiver Support Groups
- 3) Activity/Support Groups for Children and Teens
- 4) Educational Workshops
- 5) Respite & Recreation
- 6) Family Advocacy (Short-term Case Management w/triad –caregiver child, birth parent)
- 7) Outreach
- 8) Emergency Financial or Start-up Assistance

Attachment A provides more detailed descriptions regarding services to relative caregiver families and should be used by applicants as a guide when developing program content. Successful program applicants should create a comprehensive, coordinated service delivery system to help relative caregivers in their community. The Relative Caregiver Program (RCP) should not duplicate existing non-custodial support services. The Relative Caregiver Program should provide assistance where support does not currently exist and should include in its' design methods of collaborating with existing services so that relative caregiver families can be referred and assisted in accessing those services.

## **DCS GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

Goals:

- 1) To Promote family stability for children who are at risk or have been a victim of abuse and neglect by supporting them in the care of relatives.
- 2) To create a separate support network, outside the formal child welfare system of foster care.

Objectives:

- 1) To demonstrate that supportive services provided to relative caregivers and the children they are raising will help to ensure permanent placements and reduce the need for juvenile court jurisdiction and formal involvement in the child welfare system.
- 2) To support strong, viable agencies in administering quality support services through the Relative Caregiver Program.
- 3) To recognize that relative caregivers are resources who help to ensure that family ties are maintained when children cannot reside with their own parents.
- 4) To recognize that relative caregivers are providing homes for children who are otherwise at-risk of entering the foster care or juvenile justice systems and being separated from their family network.
- 5) To collaborate with relative caregivers in providing for and protecting the children in their care.
- 6) To ensure the safety and well being of children in relative care through mandated reporting of any further abuse or neglect that may occur.

## **DCS GUIDELINES**

### **Program Eligibility**

- 1) The relative caregiver may have a legal relationship with the child through custody or guardianship, or be raising the child informally.
- 2) The caregiver must be related to the child by blood, marriage, or adoption.
- 3) The relative caregiver must be able to provide a safe home for the children in their care and be committed to providing the home as long as is necessary and appropriate.
- 4) The relative caregiver must be willing to take part in an in-home assessment.
- 5) The relative caregiver must agree to accept support services.
- 6) In order to receive Emergency Financial or Start-up Assistance from RCP, the family must not be receiving any type of kinship payment or subsidy (i.e. Foster Care Board Payment, Families First Kinship Care Payment, Subsidized Guardianship) and the household income cannot exceed twice the Federal Poverty Guideline (<http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/index.shtml>).
- 7) All families served through the Relative Caregiver Program must physically and legally reside within the county or counties identified in the proposal and contract.

### **TRAINING**

DCS will work to ensure successful implementation and utilization of the Relative Caregiver Program through training. Local public entities such as the public education system, Department of Human Services, Department of Children's Services and the Juvenile or Family Court will receive training in the area of kinship care and specific training regarding the Relative Caregiver Program. The Department of Children's Services will work in cooperation with the contract agencies in each region to develop and provide these needed regional trainings.

### **ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION**

Demonstrating improved outcomes for children in the homes of relatives when supportive services are provided is the primary focus of the Relative Caregiver Program. Grant recipients will be required to collect data.

#### **ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES INCLUDE:**

- 1) Increased stability and safety for at-risk, abused, and neglected children while supporting them in the care of relatives.
- 2) Reduced numbers of children entering state custody.
- 3) Reduced numbers of children returned to state custody after being placed in relative care.
- 4) Increased likelihood that relatives can assume and maintain responsibility and care for abused and neglected children without involvement with the formal child welfare system.
- 5) Reduced use of more restrictive placements such as non- relative foster and group care.

### **EVALUATION PLAN**

- 1) Program success will be measured using the five Anticipated Outcomes.
- 2) Client satisfaction will be determined through regularly conducted surveys and focus groups.

## **DATA COLLECTION**

The exact data to be collected will be decided before services begin in each region.  
The same data will be collected from each of the regions.

We anticipate the following type of information will be collected:

- 1) Demographic description of household, including ages, relationship of household members, special needs, incomes, gender, and ethnic background.
- 2) Information regarding prior placement
- 3) Reasons for caregiving arrangement
- 4) Information regarding birth parents – including status of relationship
- 5) Potential for permanent placement
- 6) Satisfaction of caregivers
- 7) Changes in legal status
- 8) Legal relationship of caregiver to children
- 9) Copies of legal orders

## **MONTHLY REPORTING**

Each RCP site will be responsible for submitting a monthly report and invoice to DCS Central Office.  
The content of these reports will include information about service provision and fiscal expenditures.

## **SELECTION CRITERIA**

- 1) Applicants must present a plan to provide services that will empower relative caregivers to make decisions about their lives and that of the children they are raising.
- 2) Applicants must present a plan to utilize services in their region such as Families First, TennCare, Food Stamps, Foster Care, Adoption Assistance, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Earned Income Tax Credit, Educational Services, Senior Services, Legal Assistance, Child Care, Respite Care, Mental Health Services, Housing Assistance, Counseling, Homemaker Services, Transportation Services, Senior Support Services and any others that may be available in their community.
- 3) Applicants must present a plan to respond to the needs of caregivers and children including understanding issues of adjustment, attachment, separation, loss, grief, and handling family conflict. In addition, applicants must demonstrate an understanding of what external and internal barriers families seeking care face such as location, transportation, cost, time constraints, or lack of trust.
- 4) Applicants must present a plan that demonstrates an understanding of the need to work with the triad-which includes the caregiver, child, and birth parent - when appropriate. The plan must also clearly define how this need will be addressed.
- 5) Applicants must demonstrate that their program plan was developed with the active assistance of relative caregivers key stakeholders in their communities.
- 6) Applicants must present a plan to seek additional funding (private, county, state and federal) in order to maintain their programs, to recruit and train staff and to maintain quality services. It is strongly recommended that agencies do not rely on funding received from the Department of Children's Services as their only source of funding.
- 7) Public, private non-profit and educational institutions are encouraged to apply for grants.
- 8) Program administrative costs cannot exceed 7% of the total grant allotted through the DCS contract.
- 9) Priority will be given to applicants able to provide culturally competent services respectful of the caregivers and their rights to privacy, as well as representative of the population of children being served.
- 10) Applicants must present a plan for collaboration with the local Juvenile or Family Court Judge, Department of Children's Services, Department of Human Services, educational and other community based agencies in their region.

## **SELECTION PROCESS**

Applications will be reviewed by a regional committee composed of representatives from the Department of Children's Services, child advocates, and other professionals involved in the child welfare system. Recommendations of the regional committees will be given to the Commissioner for final approval.

## **AVAILABLE FUNDS**

Statewide expansion of the Relative Caregiver Program is occurring in two Phases. It is strongly recommended that agencies assess their readiness to plan, develop and implement the Relative Caregiver Program.

The Phase II of the expansion will occur in two parts. Effective March 1, 2006, the Southwest and Northeast region will be implemented with a plan to expand to the remaining three regions (Southeast, South Central, and Mid-Cumberland) in Fall 2006.

The following grant amount has been allocated for the Phase II expansion:

**Southwest -\$150,000**

This amount is based on the percentage of children in the care of grandparents and other relatives according to the 2000 US Census Report, as well as examining the number of children in foster care in the respective region.

## **PHASE II**

Agencies interested in submitting a plan to administer the Relative Caregiver Program in the Southwest region should submit their plan no later than February 16, 2006.

- 1) Grant award will be for a four-month period, from March 1, 2006 through June 30, 2006.
- 2) The grants awarded will be written as cost reimbursement contracts.
- 3) Grantees must provide the start-up funds for their programs. No advance payments will be made.
- 4) Grantees must comply with the Department of Children's Services' authorization of clients served and billing review process.
- 5) Any subcontracts must be approved by the Department of Children's Services prior to contracting.

## **TIMELINE:**

January 16, 2006 Grant Announcement Posted

January 30, 2006 Letter of Intent to Submit Proposal Must be sent to Attention of Karen Coleman by this date (electronic, telefax, or mail)

February 16, 2006 Proposals Due

February 20-24, 2005 Proposal Evaluation Team Review Proposals

February 27, 2005 Announcement of Contract

## **FORMAT AND CONTENT OF PROPOSALS:**

1) Cover Page – Include Name of Applying Agency(ies), Name of Collaborative and Lead Agency of Collaborative (if applicable), Contact Names, Addresses, and Phone Numbers, Title of Program, Time Frame of Grant, Size (amount in dollars) of Grant.

2) Narrative - Should not exceed twenty double spaced, typewritten pages, and must include the following:

- a. History/Description of Applicant Agency(ies). Should include any previous projects and experience serving kinship families, or experience related to this type of service delivery.
- b. Inventory and description of existing community services and resources.
- c. Methodology, including mission statement, network's approach, timeline, measurable goals, objectives and outcomes. Include how the program will address unmet needs of families. Proposals must not duplicate existing services. Include of staffing pattern (i.e. the number of staff that will be employed to focus on the Relative Caregiver Program specifically and what their role/position will be). Include if planning to employ relative caregivers.
- d. Planning processes used to develop program. Include any collaboration between courts, school systems, community-based agencies, public agencies and national kinship organizations.
- e. Fundraising ideas and plans

- f. If proposal is submitted by a network, include:
  - i. Description of participating agencies and their legal relationships;
  - ii. Location of primary site; and
  - iii. Lead agency that will be responsible for ensuring compliance with contract.

3) Appendix (not included in page count)

- a. Grant budget and narrative, including travel to at least one Relative Caregiver meeting at each site during the twelve-month grant period.
- b. Lead agency's annual budget
- c. Board resolution in support of program
- d. Organization Chart
- e. Board Member List
- f. Most current audit of submitting agency
- g. A copy of a valid certificate of insurance indicating liability insurance in an amount sufficient to cover any potential liability arising as a result of a contract pursuant to this Announcement of Funds.
- h. A current written bank reference, in the form of a standard business letter, indicating that the applicant's business relationship with the financial institution is in positive standing.
- i. Two current written, positive credit references in the form of standard business letters from vendors with which the applicant has done business, or documentation of a positive credit rating determined by an accredited credit bureau within the last 6 months.
- j. Letters of Support. These should include specific commitment to program by juvenile judges, other community organizations and general letters of support. Please submit no more than three.

**SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS:**

Submit one original and 4 copies of the proposal by **4:30 p.m. on February 16, 2005.**

**Applications received after that time will not be considered for funding.**

Mark applications: **RELATIVE CAREGIVER PROGRAM PROPOSAL**

Address to: Tennessee Department of Children's Services  
436 Sixth Avenue North  
8<sup>th</sup> Floor Cordell Hull Building  
Nashville, TN 37243-1290  
Attention: Karen Coleman

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

Contact: Karen Coleman  
Tennessee Department of Children's Services  
436 Sixth Avenue North  
8<sup>th</sup> Floor Cordell Hull Building  
Nashville, TN 37243-1290  
Phone Number: 615-253-2342  
Fax Number: 615-253-1717  
Email Address: Karen.Y.Coleman@state.tn.us

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Definitions of Services**

The following are definitions of services. It should be noted that there are additional services needed by kinship families that are may be provided by existing systems in each of the regions. The proposal should include a detailed plan of how staff will work with families to provide information and referrals for families to access those services. Services may be offered which have not been included in this list.

### **FAMILY ADVOCACY/ SHORT-TERM CASE MANAGEMENT**

Families would have access to a staff person to help assess family needs, provide accurate easy to follow information and serve as an advocate on behalf of the family with the school system, courts, and other public systems – as well as help caregiver work with the biological parent and child.

### **GROUPS for CHILDREN AND TEENS:**

Provision of activities, which allow children to build a sense of community and belonging among other children in relative care, and address attachment issues evolving from separation, loss, and grief. This service should be provided for children of all ages in relative care.

### **EMERGENCY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE:**

Provision of emergency one-time financial or start-up assistance for family needs such as security deposits, transitional child care assistance, assistance with purchase of clothing or furniture to adapt to care of child, etc. This assistance will not be available to families who are receiving any other type of kinship subsidy beyond the regular child only grant.

### **EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOPS:**

Provision of workshops by qualified RCP staff or other qualified personnel for relatives on topics of concern to them such as: (1) Parenting Skills, (2) Problem Solving within the Family, (3) Communicating Effectively with the Public System, (4) Responding to Family Emergencies, (5) Creative Ways to Approach Budget Problems, or (6) Working with Birth Parents.

### **INFORMATION AND REFERRAL:**

Provision of oral and written information and referral services needed by kinship families, including those not directly provided by RCP.

### **RESPIRE AND RECREATION:**

Provision of any service that gives the relative caregiver scheduled or emergency “time off” from child rearing responsibilities.

### **CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUPS:**

Provision of support through regularly scheduled meetings with other relative caregivers and trained facilitators to discuss feelings, concerns and problems facing relative caregivers.